

Message Text

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 2878

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT KS US
SUBJ: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PARK ON CURRENT KOREAN PROBLEMS

REF: SEOUL 2723

SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR MET PRESIDENT PARK APRIL 8 FOR LENGTHY SESSION FOCUSED LARGELY ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE AND RELEASE OF MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS. PARK GAVE VERY LITTLE GROUND IN RAMBLING, DEFENSIVE EXPLANATION OF HIS POSITION. WHILE RECOGNIZING THE VALUE OF RELEASE IN US PUBLIC CONTEXT, HE VIEWS RELEASE AS MOST DIFFICULT AND IN FACT POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS FOR ROKG, LIKELY TO LEAD TO DEMONSTRATIONS AND DISSIDENCE, UNLESS DEFENDANTS REPENT. END SUMMARY.

1. I MET WITH PRESIDENT PARK FOR OVER TWO HOURS LATE P.M. APRIL 8 WITH HIS SECRETARY GENERAL KIM CHONG-YOM AND PROTOCOL CHIEF CHOI KWANG-SOO, WHO SERVED AS INTERPRETER, AS ONLY OTHER ATTENDANTS.

2. AT OUTSET OF MEETING I REVIEWED POINTS MADE TO FOREIGN MINISTER BY PRESIDENT CARTER FULLY, AS WELL AS COVERING MORE BRIEFLY OTHER DISCUSSIONS IN WASHINGTON INCLUDING CURRENT STATUS OF REVIEW OF GROUND FORCE WITHDRAWAL. EMPHASIS WAS ON STATE OF US PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL OPINION

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REGARDING KOREA AND ITS ADVERSE IMPACT ON ABILITY TO SUPPORT KOREA. I POINTED OUT THAT PRESSURES BUILDING UP FOR PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY PRESIDENT AND OTHERS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF HUMAN RIGHTSSITUATION IN KOREA, OUR DESIRE TO AVOID SUCH STATEMENTS, AS SPELLED OUT TO FOREIGN MINISTER, AND NEED THEREFORE FOR PRESIDENT PARK TO MAKE SYMBOLIC GESTURE, WHICH UNDERSTOOD TO RELATE TO RELEASE OF MYONGDONG PRISONERS. I NOTED PAST OFFER

BY PARK OF HELP ON IMPROVING KOREA'S PUBLIC IMAGE DURING FEBRUARY 28 MEETING WITH GENERAL VESSEY AND MYSELF AND PRESSED PARK TO PROVIDE SUCH HELP AT THIS TIME IN KOREA'S OWN INTEREST AND BEFORE ACTION BY PARK WOULD BECOME RESPONSE TO US PUBLIC PRESSURE.

3. PARK'S LENGTHY RESPONSE WAS UNCHARACTERISTICALLY DEFENSIVE IN TONE, RAMBLING AND REPETITIVE. HIS POSITION SUMMED UP BELOW. HIS DISCUSSION FOCUSED ALMOST WHOLLY ON RELEASE OF MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS, WHILE HE MADE NO COMMENTS ON TROOP WITHDRAWAL ISSUE. HE RECOGNIZED THAT RELEASE COULD BE VERY EFFECTIVE IN AMERICAN PUBLIC CONTEXT AND THAT FROM KOREA'S OWN INTERESTS AMERICAN PUBLIC SUPPORT WOULD BE EXTREMELY ADVANTAGEOUS, ALTHOUGH INDICATING DOUBTS ON THIS SCORE DUE TO US PRESS.

4. PARK THEN DESCRIBED HOW KOREA VIEWS ITS PROBLEMS WITH AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION ON BASIS AT RECENT BLUE HOUSE STAFF MEETING. KOREA FACES THREE MAJOR PROBLEMS: 1) THE TONG SON PARK INVESTIGATION; 2) UNIFICATION CHURCH; AND 3) HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. (IT WILL BE NOTED THAT PARK IGNORED KCIA INVESTIGATION.) WITH RESPECT TONG SON PARK, THIS INVESTIGATION ENTIRELY US PROBLEM SINCE TONG SON PARK RECEIVED HIS COMMISSION FROM US BROKERS AND OPERATED IN US WITH NO CONNECTIONS TO KOREAN GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER IF INVESTIGATIONS FIND KOREA GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBLE HE WISHED TO BE INFORMED. (I POINTED OUT THAT OSROK HAD DESIGNATED TONG SON PARK AS KOREA'S AGENT.) UNIFICATION CHURCH AND REVEREND MOON LIKEWISE HAD NO CONNECTION WITH KOREAN GOVERNMENT. IN FACT AT ONE TIME MOON HAD WISHED TO MAKE CONTRIBUTION TO NEW VILLAGE MOVEMENT TO PARK PERSONALLY, BUT PRESIDENT PARK
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HAD REFUSED TO SEE HIM SINCE HE WAS ALREADY CREATING PROBLEMS IN US. PRESIDENT PARK'S ALLEGED MEETING WITH TONG SON PARK AND PARK BO HI (UNIFICATION CHURCH OFFICIAL) WAS COMPLETELY FALSE REPORT.

4. TURNING TO HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, PARK REITERATED REPEATEDLY HIS BASIC POSITION THAT MYONGDONG TRIAL WAS IN ACCORDANCE WITH KOREAN CONSTITUTION AND LAW AND THEREFORE NOT HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTION. WHILE RECOGNIZING THERE ARE RESTRICTIONS OF RIGHTS OF DISSENT, HE JUSTIFIED THESE, AS HE HAS IN THE PAST, ON THE NEED FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AND UNITY AND PRESERVING THE PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE DEMOCRACY.

5. PARK BLAMED STATE OF CURRENT OPINION IN US PRIMARILY ON US PRESS AND EFFORTS OF CRITICS IN US AND IN KOREA, THROUGH LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGNS AND INTERVIEWS WITH PRESS. HE GAVE ME LIST OF 36 ORGANIZATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA, MOST IN US, BEHIND THIS CRITICISM AND URGED THAT WE INVESTIGATE FINANCING OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS, SINCE HE IS CONVINCED SOME FUNDS COME FROM

NORTH KOREA WHICH IS TRYING TO ESTABLISH KOREAN RESIDENT ORGANIZATION IN US SIMILAR TO CHOSEN SOREN. HE ALSO IMPLIED US ADMINISTRATION HAS PAMPERED AND ACCOMMODATED PRESS CRITICS, WHICH I QUICKLY REBUTTED. HIS ATTACKS ON US PRESS COVERAGE OF KOREA WERE STRONG AND FOCUSED ON BOTH ERRONEOUS PRESS REPORTS, SUCH AS FALSE ALLEGATION AMBASSADOR HAN HAD BOUGHT RESIDENCE IN NEW YORK AREA AS ASYLUM FOR PRESIDENT PARK, AND ON MISLADING COVERAGE, SUCH AS WIDE COVERAGE GIVEN RECENT NEW YORK MEETING OF A FEW CRITICS. HE SUMMED UP HIS FEELINGS BY ASKING WHY CRITICS CONTINUE TO ATTACK KOREA AS THE WORST COUNTRY, A CRITICISM HE FELT MOST UNFAIR.

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6. I OBJECTED TO PARK'S BLAMING KOREA'S PROBLEMS WITH AMERICAN OPINION ON PRESS AND CRITICS. I POINTED OUT THAT HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE REPRESENTS FUNDAMENTAL AND HISTORIC THRUST OF AMERICAN PEOPLE AND ROKG MUST UNDERSTAND DEPTH OF AMERICAN FEELING ON THIS ISSUE, IRRESPECTIVE OF PRESS COVERAGE OF KOREA. PROVIDED PARK WITH EXTENDED DESCRIPTION OF EVOLUTION AMERICAN OPINION ON KOREA AS WELL AS ON OTHER INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, STRESSING NEED FOR ROKG TO ACT IN OWN INTERESTS TO REVERSE ADVERSE TREND.

7. WITH RESPECT RELEASE OF MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS, PARK KEPT REITERATING THAT HE WISHES TO BE LENIENT. NEVERTHELESS HE COULD JUSTIFY RELEASE ONLY IF MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS REPENTED. RELEASE UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES WITHOUT REPENTANCE WOULD APPEAR TO BE REACTION TO US PUBLIC PRESSURES INCLUDING STATEMENTS ALREADY MADE BY PAST AND PRESENT ADMINISTRATIONS. IF THE MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS WERE RELEASED UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THEY WOULD CLAIM TO BE THE ONLY KOREAN PATRIOTS AND WILL FEEL FREE TO AROUSE STUDENTS AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS, LEADING TO WIDE-

SPREAD PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH HE ANTICIPATED WOULD HAVE CONTINUED SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT IN US. IN FACT MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS CONTINUED DEFIANCE OF KOREAN GOVERNMENT WAS IN PART RESULT OF ENCOURAGEMENT FROM US PRESS COVERAGE AND STATEMENTS.

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8. PARK SAID THAT RELEASE OF THE DEFENDANTS WITHOUT REPENTANCE COULD THUS LEAD TO SOCIAL CONFUSIONS, DECLINE OF ECONOMY AS BUSINESS MEN BECOME UNEASY, AND POTENTIALLY NORTH KOREAN INTERVENTION. RELEASE UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES WAS NOT ONLY DIFFICULT BUT POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS FOR ROKG. HE SAID PRIORITY MUST STILL BE GIVEN TO MAINTAINING NATIONAL SECURITY AND UNITY OF PEOPLE.

9. PARK INSISTED THAT HE REALLY WISHED TO BE LENIENT AND WOULD HAVE DONE SO IN QUIET MANNER SOME TIME BACK HAD THERE NOT BEEN PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY AMERICANS EXPRESSING CONCERN. I QUICKLY INTERRUPTED TO POINT OUT THAT WELL BEFORE THESE STATEMENTS ISSUED ALMOST ONE YEAR AGO, WE HAVE PRIVATELY URGED QUIET RELEASE OF MYONGDONG PRISONERS. PARK REITERATED HIS FEARS ABOUT DANGERS OF PRESENT RELEASE AND SAID IT WOULD ONLY LEAD TO FUTURE CRACKDOWN.

10. I ARGUED THAT RELEASE OF KIM DAE JUNG AND OTHER MYONGDONG PRISONERS NEED NOT LEAD TO "SOCIAL CONFUSION" GIVEN STRENGTH SUPPORT OF PARK GOVERNMENT. I URGED AT CONCLUSION OUR MEETING EFFORTS BY PARK TO ACT IN MANNER WHICH WILL SERVE KOREA'S INTERESTS IN THE US.

11. COMMENT: MY IMPRESSION IS THAT, DESPITE PARK'S RESISTANCE TO RELEASE OF MYONGDONG PRISONERS WITHOUT REPENTANCE, ISSUE IS FAR FROM CLOSED. HE IS UNDER NO ILLUSIONS REGARDING THE STRENGTH OF OUR POSITION AND PROBABLY ACCEPTS POSITIVE EFFECTS IN TERMS OF KOREA'S OWN INTERESTS IN US, ALTHOUGH QUITE BITTER ON US PRESS COVERAGE. HE WAS, FOR PARK, UNCHARACTERISTICALLY DEFENSIVE AND UNCOMFORTABLE TO POINT OF EXPRESSING HOPE THAT ISSUE NEED NOT BE RAISED WITH HIM IN FUTURE, ALTHOUGH KNOWING FULL WELL THAT IT WOULD BE. I DOUBT VERY MUCH THAT HE WILL ACT IN VERY NEAR FUTURE, PARTICULARLY GIVEN CURRENT STUDENT DIFFICULTIES. BEYOND THAT, BELIEVE THAT IF HE COULD FIND SOME MEANS OF NEUTRALIZING IMQACT OF RELEASE, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT FOR FUTURE DISSIDENCE, HE WOULD BE PREPARED

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TO ACT, BUT HE HAS FOUND NO FORMULA OTHER THAN CALL FOR
REPENTANCE, WHICH APPEARS NON-STARTER. I INTEND TO
CONTINUE TO PRESS HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE NOW WITH SMALL CIRCLE
OF OFFICIALS CLOSE TO AND WITH ACCESS TO PARK.
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